



**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD**  
**Washington, DC 20423**

*Office of Economics, Environmental Analysis and Administration*

March 12, 2004

Ms. Robyn Thorson  
Regional Director  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
One Federal Drive  
Ft. Snelling, MN 55111

Re: STB Finance Docket No. 34435, Ameren Energy Generating Company -  
Construction and Operation - between Coffeen and Walshville, Illinois

Dear Ms. Thorson:

On February 5, 2004, Ameren Energy Generating Company (AEGC or the applicant) filed a petition with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502 for authority to construct and operate a new rail line in Montgomery County, Illinois (IL). The project would involve the construction of an approximately 13-mile rail line to connect AEGC's Coffeen Power Plant with existing rail lines of the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) and Union Pacific Railroad (UP). Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Board's environmental rules, the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) will prepare an environmental document that evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. The purpose of this letter is to request information from your agency on the resources under your jurisdiction that could be affected by the proposed project, as well as any permits and approvals that may be required.

Coal would be the primary commodity carried over the proposed rail line. However, the rail line would be operated as a common carrier rail line and other shippers on the line would be able to request rail service, as applicable. The Coffeen Power Plant currently receives most of its coal via the Norfolk Southern Railway (NS). Although the Sorento to Coffeen rail line is owned and operated by NS, NS must access this isolated line by way of trackage rights over BNSF's Litchfield to Sorento rail line. The proposed rail line construction would provide the power plant with alternative rail access for transporting coal, and would also increase the coal mine options from which AEGC could receive its coal.

The proposed 13-mile rail line is shown as Route A in the attached map. Route A would begin at the power plant, and travel southwest and roughly parallel to the existing NS line for approximately one mile. Within this first one-mile segment, a new crossing of Coffeen Lake

**Notice to Readers: The last page of this document lists all the Federal, state and local agencies that received this same consultation letter from the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis.**

would be required. This new crossing would be located near the existing NS lake crossing. Route A would then cross the NS line at-grade and proceed in a westerly direction, closely following an existing transmission line corridor. After approximately seven miles, the new line would split to the north and southwest. The north segment would be roughly one-mile long and would connect the new rail line with the existing UP rail line. The southwest segment would continue to parallel the transmission line corridor for approximately 2 more miles, then veer off to the west for approximately one mile before connecting with the existing BNSF rail line. Route A would be located entirely within Montgomery County, IL.

AEGC also identified a second possible route for alternative rail access, shown as Route B in the attached map. Route B would involve NS voluntarily selling, leasing or otherwise allowing AEGC to use its Sorento to Coffeen track. Should NS do this, AEGC would still construct an approximately five-mile rail line from the NS line near Sorento north to the existing UP rail line near Walshville, IL. The existing NS rail line already connects with BNSF's line at Sorento. Route B would be located in Montgomery and Bond counties, IL.

The environmental document will evaluate both Routes A and B, as well as the no action alternative. Route C, also shown in the attachment, was initially considered by AEGC. Route C, however, was dismissed from further consideration by AEGC because of its greater length, higher construction costs, increased number of road crossings, and greater potential for adverse impacts to residences and other sensitive land uses than either Routes A or B.

This letter begins the process by which SEA will assess the potential environmental effects, both positive and negative, that may be associated with the proposed rail line construction and operation. We appreciate your assistance in identifying whether resources of concern to your agency may be affected by the proposed project. We request your response by April 12, 2004, so that we may be able to schedule any meetings, site visits, or surveys, conduct necessary follow-up activities, and incorporate your response into the scope of the study, as appropriate.

Dawkins Environmental Consulting is serving as SEA's independent third-party consultant in this proceeding, and will assist SEA in the preparation of the environmental document. Please send your comments to:

Ms. Jo Carole Dawkins  
Dawkins Environmental Consulting  
P.O. Box 845  
Springville, Alabama 35146

SEA will prepare either an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS). SEA's decision on whether to prepare an EA or EIS will be based in part on comments received in response to this agency consultation letter. SEA will make the environmental document available for review by agencies and the public as required by NEPA

and the Board's environmental rules (49 CFR 1105). In reaching its decision, the Board will take into account the environmental document and all environmental comments that are received.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Jo Carole Dawkins, Project Manager for Dawkins Environmental Consulting, at 205-467-6034, or Dave Navecky, SEA Project Manager, at 202-565-1593. Thank you for your assistance.

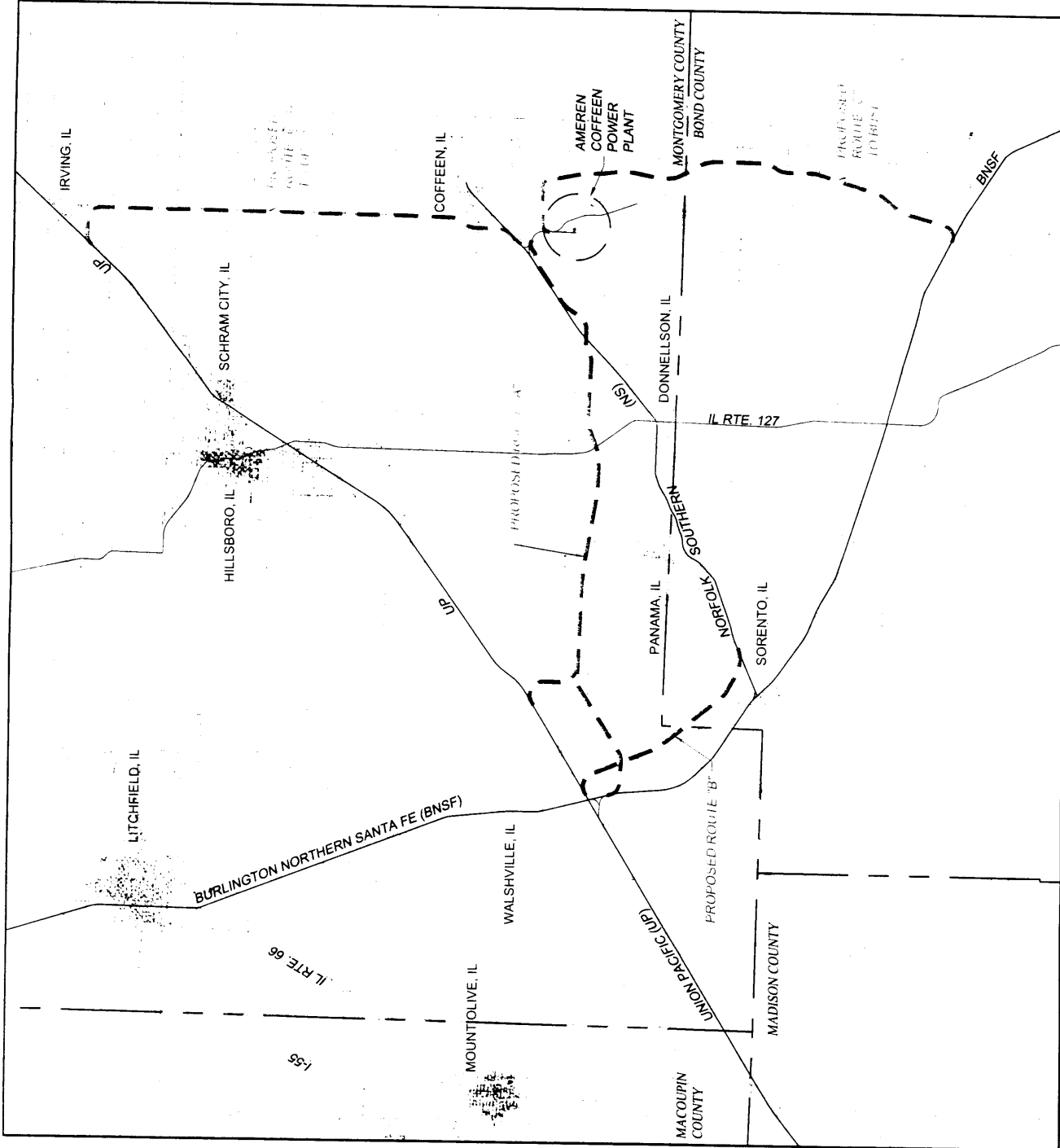
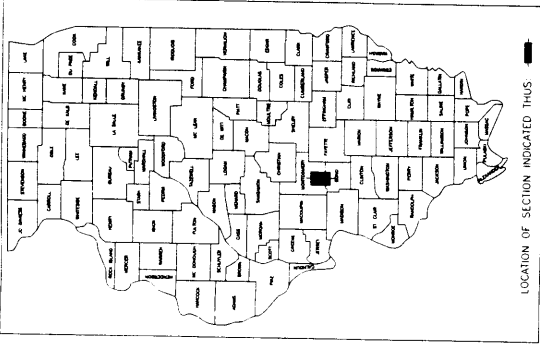
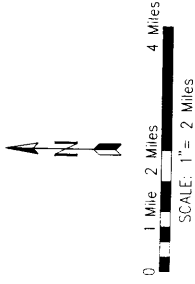
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Rutson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "V" and a stylized "R".

Victoria Rutson  
Chief  
Section of Environmental Analysis

Attachment

PROPOSED ROUTE "A"  
PROPOSED ROUTE "B"  
PROPOSED ROUTE "C"



**STB Finance Docket No. 34435, Ameren Energy Generating Company - Construction and Operation - between Coffeen and Walshville, Illinois**

**List of Agencies Receiving the Initial Consultation Letter**

Ms. Robyn Thorson  
Regional Director  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
One Federal Drive  
Ft. Snelling, MN 55111

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
St. Louis District Regulatory Branch  
1222 Spruce Street  
St. Louis, MO 63103-2833

Mr. Kenneth A. Westlake, Chief  
Environmental Planning and Evaluation Branch  
Mailcode: B-19J  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
77 West Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604

Mr. C.J. Liddell,  
District Conservationist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Montgomery County Hillsboro Field Office  
1621 Vandalia Road, Suite D  
Hillsboro, IL 62049

Mr. Daniel Mueller  
District Conservationist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Bond County Greenville Field Office  
1111 East Harris Avenue  
Greenville, IL 62246

Mr. Steve Davis  
Div. of Natural Resource Review & Coordination  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
One Natural Resource Way  
Springfield, IL 62702-1271

Mr. Timothy W. Martin, Secretary

Illinois Department of Transportation  
2300 South Dirksen Parkway, Room 300  
Springfield, IL 62764

Ms. Renee Cipriano, Director  
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency  
P.O. Box 19276  
Springfield, IL 62794-9276

Mr. Maynard Crossland, Director  
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency  
500 East Madison  
Springfield, IL 62701-1028

Mr. Mike Havera, Chairman  
Montgomery County Board  
P.O. Box 122  
Hillsboro, IL 62049

Ms. Jill Franks, Chair  
Bond County Board  
203 West College Avenue  
Greenville, IL 62246-1037

Regional Director  
NPS - Midwest Region  
1709 Jackson Street  
Omaha, NE 68102